



Al-Risala 1992

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The Question of Life

Greta Garbo, the great screen actress, was born in Sweden on September 18, 1905, and died in the USA on April 15, 1990. In her youth bent upon acquiring money and fame, she entered the world of films. Her career was a resounding success, and she became known as a goddess of the screen.

Her career in films no doubt turned her into a celebrity, but she had become a puppet in the hands of the film-makers. She was expected to walk, talk, dress and style her hair exactly as they dictated and this was something which robbed her of her personality. Massage and make-up might make her outwardly look well, but these things could not ward off the damage which, 'was being done to her disposition. She had become so tired of the unrelenting demands of producers, directors and the public that, when she was alone, she would feel overwhelmed by her feelings of helplessness and would often become hysterical.

Finally, in 1941, she gave up films in order to live the life of a recluse, until she died at the age of 84. Thus, in the oblivion of death her life of fame came to an end.

Greta Garbo wanted to live and die without fanfare. It was, therefore, with great difficulty that a would-be biographer, Antoni Gronowicz, persuaded her to grant him permission to write her biography. She agreed on the one strict condition that the book be published after her death. The book was completed but the author died in 1985 at the age of 71, survived by Greta Garbo. It was only after her death in 1990 that this biography, entitled *Garbo; Her Story*, was published in the US.

The *Times of India* of September 9, 1990, published an excerpt from the book. The passage on what Garbo had to say about the later part of her life is reproduced below:

I have lost a belief in people, in a God who put me in a situation without replying clearly to my questions. I am floating on the waters of life without direction, without a goal, without the knowledge of why and how long. (p. 15).

The story of Greta Garbo may seem extreme, but it is more or less the story of all human beings. Everyone has forgotten God. Everyone is running after a 'God' of his own creation. When he finds it, he continues to feel unsatisfied. In mistaken belief, he had set a goal for himself which, in fact, was not what he wanted.

Everyone starts the journey of life with the conviction that he is fast approaching his destination. But when he arrives at his 'destination' it dawns on him that it is not the destination he imagined, but an abyss into which he will now be plunged along with all his wishes and desires.

The Principle of Avoidance

According to Abu Hurayrah, a man once came and said many unkind things to Abu Bakr. The latter, however, remained silent. The Prophet watched in wonderment and smiled. However when the man went on and on with his abuse, Abu Bakr took him up on some of the things he said. This displeased the Prophet and he got up and left. Later, Abu Bakr went to him and said, "O Messenger of God, you were sitting, looking pleased, when that man was saying all those hurtful things to me. When I chose to reply to some of the things he said, you became angry and left." The Prophet replied, "When you held your peace, there was an angel who was replying to him. But when you spoke, the angel left and Satan entered."

If someone says distressing things to you and you pay him back in his own coin, the matter will immediately escalate.

From a wordy duel it will turn into a fracas which will ultimately lead to extremer forms of violence. Bear in mind that it is your retort which leads to its eruption. Conversely, if a man wants actively to do you physical harm, your silence will nip this evil in the bud.

If, in the face of provocation, you keep quiet, the other man will gradually soften up. After letting off steam, he will have nothing left to say. Argument leads to counter argument. If you do not react, the other man is bound to fall silent.

A counter-argument only sets off a chain-reaction. Then Satan is given the opportunity to play upon the two egos in such a way that a minor disagreement is turned into an all-out clash. If, on the other hand, you avoid a confrontation, "your antagonist will mellow down". Now it is the angel's turn to awaken the better natures of both parties, to reactivate their consciences, to arouse feelings of guilt and the urge to self-reform.

In the first case, you put the blame on the other person and want to take revenge. There, it is satan who dictates. In the second case, you hold yourself responsible and feel like having a change of heart. There, it is the angel who dictates.

Two forces lie dormant within you. One is your conscience, and that is the one which is in your favour. The other is your ego, and that is the one which is against you. Which one you awaken is entirely up to yourself. Either one can be fostered by your deeds and your utterances. The choice is yours.

Stroke the fires of the ego and you will have nothing but enemies. Nurture the conscience, and all of your adversaries will automatically be overcome.

It is significant that in the above-mentioned incident, the Prophet did not become angry at the man who was berating Abu Bakr. On the contrary, he was displeased when Abu Bakr started reacting to him. The principle of avoidance applies to believers and non-believers alike. It is for the believers to see that it is acted upon.

Remaining united and not initiating hostilities

In the year 10AH the prophet sent Khalid Ibn Walid to the Yemen. Khalid preached Islam there and soon the tribe of Banu Harith Ibn Ka'ab accepted Islam and returned with him to Medina. "How was it," the Prophet asked them, "that you were always victorious in wars you fought before becoming Muslims?" "We never sought to overcome anybody," they replied. "True," the Prophet agreed, "but you always came out on top when others fought against you." "The reason for this, they explained, "was that we always remained united. We were never divided, nor did we wrongfully initiate hostilities. "True;" the Prophet replied (*Seerat Ibn Hisham*, Vol II, p. 93).

The Bounties of God

At first, we had an ordinary one-band transistor radio in our house. We could listen to the news broadcasts on it from Delhi and nearby stations. But it was not possible to listen to international broadcasts on it.

We later purchased a bigger, four-metre-band radio set. This used to receive broadcasts from all over the world. When we started receiving the BBC and other foreign stations, it occurred to us how deprived we had been of all the really worthwhile programmes broadcast by the different nations. All the time we had only had a small transistor we had been losing in terms of information and intellectual enrichment. With the bigger set we were tuned into a whole treasure trove of ideas.

Man's relationship to God is similar to this. Receiving God's inspiration is like receiving a broadcast from the infinite. At all times a torrent of heavenly nourishment is raining down upon us, but how much of this one can receive depends on the size of one's radio set. If it is small one will receive very limited amounts. But if it is large, one will receive such floods of heavenly inspiration as will seem like an enormous ocean.

Today every man is the victim of his own limitations. One is locked in groupism, i.e. he is biased towards certain people or certain groups of people. Another is so lost in petty interests that he knows nothing of what is happening all around him. Yet another's level of thinking is so low that it prevents him altogether from plumbing the deeper realities. Narrow-mindedness has left him so intellectually bankrupt that there is no way that he can appreciate the grandeur of God's scheme of things.

The rays of the sun do not enter a closed room. Similarly, a closed mind cannot be the recipient of God's inspiration. For God's inspiration to reach a man, he must throw open the windows of his mind.

The Meaningfulness of the Universe

Arthur Koestler has quoted Albert Einstein in *Janus* as saying: I maintain that cosmic religiousness is the strongest and most noble driving force of scientific research. A contemporary has said, not unrightly, that the serious research scholar in our generally materialistic age is the only deeply religious human being.

The meaning of religiousness in the above saying means belief in the unseen meaningfulness. When a scientist sets about his research, the driving force in his work at that point in time is this hidden belief in him that there is unity and meaning in the universe. If he is bereft of this belief, he can never be serious in his research.

Thus it can be said that in reality there is no difference between a scientist and a religious-minded person. A religious person performs certain acts of devotion with the object of pleasing God, or of finding a reward in the hereafter. The religious person neither sees God nor the Hereafter, yet he engages in his religious acts with extreme devotion and concentration. The reason behind this devotion is his absolute faith in the unseen realities. Exactly similar is the case of the scientist. He devotes his whole life to the investigation and research of a certain reality. The reality lies hidden in the unknown world. Nevertheless, the scientist has this prior belief and conviction that what he wants to discover lies hidden in the universe, although it has yet to come within his purview.

The essence of religion is to believe in the meaningfulness of the universe, a meaningfulness which has yet to come before our eyes, for, in this world, all higher realities lie hidden. The scientist then stands, in his quest for knowledge, on the same ground as the man of religion, for the higher the form of research, the greater the emphasis on the unseen. It is in the hidden realities of the universe that both the scientist and man of religion must seek divine significance.

Just One Mistake!

During a visit I made once to a village, I observed a man stripping the bark from a neem tree which he had just cut down. I asked him why he was removing the bark. He smiled and said, "If I don't, the worms will ruin the wood."

This was in 1965. Ten years later I again visited the same village. As it happened, there was a log of neem lying by the wayside. Whoever had felled the tree had not removed its bark. This reminded me of what the wood-cutter had told me on my previous visit. I thought to myself, 'Let me verify whether what that man told me was true or not. I found the owner of the log and requested him to bring some implement to remove the bark. He readily obliged and I could then see that many worms about an inch in length had made channels in the tree trunk, even though they themselves were soft and pulpy.

This is the way of nature. The lesson we learn from it is that in life, we have to be very prudent, for it takes only one small mistake to bring ruination. Simple neglect – can destroy all prospects of advancement. Nature could, of course, have provided a safeguard to the tree trunk, even with its bark still on, but it made its preservation dependent upon the removal of its bark. Human beings are subject to a similar law of nature in that they must take deliberate steps to ensure the positive outcome of whatever situation they may find themselves in.

In 1944, two men from Jaunpur (U.P.) started their business together with a small capital of a few hundred rupees. God was kind to them and their business flourished. In six months, their business was worth Rs. 30,000. At this point, however, they developed some differences and wanted to part company. Through a mediator it was decided that one of the partners would hand over the inventory to the other after being compensated for it.

One partner received Rs. 15,000 as his share. (That was in 1949. Today, that sum would be the equivalent of several lakhs of rupees). He used this money to start a cloth shop in Jaunpur and, within a year, had doubled his money. In the second year of business, many good opportunities came his way and the doors of Success lay wide open to him.

It takes an Earthquake

If a man is to enter Paradise, he cannot do so after living a life full of errors of omission and commission, with a deaf ear turned resolutely to his conscience. If he is to enter heaven's gates, a whole moral revolution must take place within him. And it must be of such an intensity that it is like a veritable earthquake. If this seems a very high price to pay, it must be remembered that it is in every way commensurate with the divine refinement of the Paradise he hopes to secure.

In every man lies hidden a great divine being. But that being must be nurtured and released, very much in the way that an enormous amount of energy is released from an atom when it is smashed. Man's real task in his current life of trial is to produce just such an explosion from within, so that, that hidden divine self may make its appearance.

Every man is born in tune with the nature of his Maker. But circumstances, traditions, desires, and many other such pressures, draw veil after veil across his moral vision: blunting his perceptions and muting his conscience. He gradually comes to live out his life according to the way his thinking has been conditioned. If he is to make any spiritual progress, he must recognize the artificiality of these veils and tear them aside, no matter what the material cost.

Making a break with one's own mental make-up is definitely one of the most difficult things one can attempt. But it is in the struggle to undertake this task that God has kept hidden all the secrets of His blessings for human beings. The Qur'an says that when man makes this necessary break, his psyche is transcended and raised to the level of the divine.

The divine nature once awakened in him, he becomes the direct recipient of God's blessings. He leaves this world of limitations and enters a world of boundless joy. Just as his thinking becomes divine, so also does his moral sense. This happens in the same way that a beautiful tree emerges from a seed. But the most important factor is that the seed should be willing to break open and ultimately, to destroy itself, so that this should happen.

In every man, there is a divine being who can enter the gates of heaven in the hereafter. But this hidden man can come into being only when the outer self is ready to produce an inner revolution of the intensity of an earthquake.

In order to promote his worldly desires, and for the sake of expediency, man places everything he cherishes at stake. Whereas detachment from material goals and a refusal to act out of expediency would immediately open the gates of heaven to him. Unfortunately, most people are unaware of this vital truth.

Even the Python

Pythons are of many kinds, but the very mention of the name conjures up the image of a dangerous reptile. The type of python which is found in the Indian Jungles is called python molurs. Its length is 20 feet and its weight is 200 pounds and more when it is fully grown.

However, like many other beasts, the python is not a dangerous animal. It attacks a man or a living being in two instances only when it is very hungry or when it is attacked. In normal times it just lies about like any other harmless creature. After a long study of the python, one zoologist writes:

A python, however large it may be, is nervous by nature and like all other snakes will never attack deliberately, nor will it become aggressive, unless provoked. It threatens by hissing, or disappears if encountered in the wild, but does not stand up and fight as one might imagine.

This attribute in the python is not just a matter of coincidence. It is the direct result of planning by the Creator of the universe. The python is a silent call from nature. It conveys the message, in the language of action, not to harm others even if you are a python. If you are powerful, and far above others in status, even then do not harm them.

How ironic it is that man is cruel to his fellow men in a world where he is taught that he should not be cruel even at the level of the lion and the python.

False Greatness

Once when Umar Faruq was making a speech in his capacity as Caliph, a member of the audience stood up and said, "By God, if we find any crookedness in you, we shall straighten it with our swords." On the face of it, such severe criticism amounts to insolence. But neither did Umar Faruq take offence, nor did any other member of the gathering get up to ask why this man had made such an offensive comment. This can be explained by the fact that criticism of this kind was a commonplace among the Companions of the Prophet, and continued to be so in succeeding generations. No one ever took such criticism amiss. The only reservations made were that no accusations should be leveled without there being solid proof to support them, and that no one should be maligned by baseless allegations.

The reason for this behavior is very simple. The people of that time lived not in the greatness of man, but in the greatness of God. If their feelings were never hurt when one of their numbers was criticized, it was because they had surrendered all rights of greatness to God and God alone. By criticizing man, God's greatness was not, therefore, going to be affected.

On the contrary, if in modern times a known personality becomes the subject of critical attack, no matter how academic and well-supported the criticism may be, his followers will become enraged. What is the reason for such a reaction? The reason is that they have accepted these mortal men as their greats, and cannot bear that they should be toppled from the pedestals on which they have placed them. The people are now of such a temper that they utter the words, *Allahu Akbar* (God is great) with their lips, but not with their hearts. Their words bear no relation to reality because there is no corresponding subservience in their minds. The greatness in which they live is of the people, not of God.

The fact should be grasped that the opportunity to live in the greatness of a non-God will exist only while man's time of trial persists on earth. When this period is over, that state of affairs will come to an end. Then those who have fed on false greatness will find themselves starving, for there will be no such nourishment in the life after death. If they wish to survive, it shall be by the greatness of God Almighty, their Creator.

What Makes a Man Whole

In the course of a conversation the other day, I said that in my interaction with people I have never found a single person who could be considered whole. Everyone was Mr. 50%. There are no Mr. Hundred percent.

All were experts on facts which affected others. No one was an expert on the truth which affected the self. Everyone talked of principles, but no one acted on them. People talked of the light, while spreading darkness, all around them. They vaunted the truth, yet hid behind falsehoods. And all this while wearing a halo of righteousness.

Everyone was pleasant in disposition so long as he went on hearing what he wanted to hear. The moment something was said which was not to his liking; the mask of pleasantness would fall from his face. He would even go to the length of becoming an oppressor, but always behaving as if he were the oppressed. Clever enough to understand what lay in his own interests, he would become deaf and dumb where others were concerned.

Everyone pursues his own self-interest while claiming to serve the faith and humanity. He is well ahead of others when it comes to talking in this way, but when it comes to action, he lags far behind. It is only when he is engaged in some form of destruction that he works up any real fervour, claiming all along that whatever he does is constructive in its aims. This he says wearing an air of great seriousness. Who knows what idle, dangerous thoughts lie behind?

He leads others to death's door, but describes himself as the champion of mankind. Everything for him is a matter of personal gain.

If people said plainly what they intended to do and then did so without any fanfare, they would get the credit for speaking the truth and behaving properly. But in the prevailing conditions, no credit of any sort may be given.

It is pitiable world indeed where everyone is half of what he should be, while proclaiming himself to be whole. How can the man who represents autumn present himself as the leader of spring?

The Casting of a Spell

The following incident concerning an act of ill-will against the Prophet of Islam has been recorded in the books of Hadith, although the Prophet himself was loth to mention it. It seems that a man by the name of Lubaid ibn Asam, a resident of Medina, was an expert in magic and in the 7th year of Hijra was approached by some Jews from Khybar to cast a powerful spell over the Prophet. They offered him three gold coins and he acceded to their request. He then set about obtaining a few strands of the Prophet's hair and some teeth from his comb. Casting a magical spell over these, he wrapped them in a bunch of dates and threw them into the well of Zarwan which belonged to one Banu Razique. All this was done in the greatest of secrecy.

The spell worked and the Prophet remained under its influence for several days. During this time he suffered terribly. Then he prayed to God to alleviate his affliction. An angel came down to him to explain to him what had actually happened. The Prophet then went to the well and had all the things under the magical spell removed and destroyed. He was then instructed by God to recite two surahs from the Qur'an (113, 114) which would guard him against ills of this kind.

The Prophet was content with the undoing of the spell and, subsequently, he hardly ever mentioned it. There was a danger that if the Muslims had come to know about the incident they would have punished the magician. When asked why he did not speak of this incident, the Prophet replied that "as far as the magic was concerned, God cured me of it, and I do not like the idea of inciting the people against anyone."

A believer should be more interested in solving a problem than in defaming the man who is the cause of the problem.

The Religion of Nature

If a man wishes to travel across the sea, he will not do so if he were walking on dry land. He does not go on foot straight into the sea as if he were on terra firma. Instead, for the occasion, he will hire a boat, sit in it, and continue on his journey.

By such behaviour, he acknowledges that he is living in a world made not by him but his Creator, and that the world is subject to God's laws. Man is, therefore, obliged to lead his life in complete accordance with this external world made by God, at least as regards matters of a physical nature. Had man thought him self the Creator of this world, he would have walked straight into the water as he walks across the land. Man had opted for this conformance with the laws of the world of nature in 50 per cent of his life. He never deviates from it. But he has abandoned this conformance in the other 50 per cent of his life.

There are two aspects to a man's life, the one physical and the other ethical. In the physical aspect of his life man has totally submitted to God as have the rest of the animate and inanimate objects in this world. But in the ethical aspect, he follows the dictates of his own conscience – or desires – instead of God's commands. Instead of the posture of submission, he adopts the stance of rebellion. How is this contradiction to be resolved? The only solution to this problem is in the acceptance of Islam. In that way, a man becomes God's servant one hundred per cent: he gives Him his total obedience.

Since the result of deviation from nature in the material world immediately comes to light, man, in the material aspect of his life conforms to natural laws. In the world, however, the result of any deviation does not immediately become known, and so man goes on defying God's laws.

If a farmer does not follow the right method of cultivation, he cannot expect to reap a full harvest. Similarly, one who does not obey the moral code in this world will find that only remorse and deprivation will be his lot in the life hereafter.

Linguistics

On account of the superstitious beliefs attaching to language, linguistics has suffered from highly unfavourable circumstances. That is why, for thousands of years it failed to make any progress. Dr Earnest Gellner, a linguist writes:

In antiquity it was generally believed that writing was the gift of God, for instance, the Indian concept of "Brahm lipi". Words and the forms of speech were considered to have been given to man by the gods and, as such, they commanded the highest veneration from humans. John Stevens in his book, *Sacred Calligraphy of the East*, has presented research, carried out by him, which shows that the concept of 'sacred' calligraphy remained alive in the world for centuries. Scholars did differ as to the origin of calligraphy, whether in Egypt, China, India or any other place. One idea, however, is common to all ancient systems. Writing is divine. It is inherently holy. Writing is the speech of the gods.

History shows that human languages have been the object of superstitions for thousands of years. It was supposed that certain languages had a divine origin, and that their speakers enjoyed a special status above others. For instance, for centuries the Greek language had been supposed to be superior to other languages, Greek being the language of the gods, while other languages were those of barbarians.

The same was the case with Hebrew. In the Jewish Christian World it was an age-old belief that Hebrew was God's own language and that it was the first language to be used in the world. Wonderly and Eugene Nida, who made a detailed study of the influences of Christian beliefs on languages, have made this analysis:

One of the factors which retarded linguistic progress was the belief among early Christian writers, and persisting well into the Renaissance era, that all languages were derived from Hebrew.

(William L. Wonderly and Eugene Nida in *Linguistic and Christian Missions*. Anthropological Linguistics, Vol.5.pp.104-144)

The concept of 'divine' language was wholly a product of superstitious beliefs, having nothing to do with reality. Whenever it comes to be supposed of a language that it is the language of the gods it acquires the status of a sacred language. It becomes an object of reverence in people's eyes. It no longer remains an object of investigation. After this stage, making a critical analysis of it or advocating a new method to develop it or any other such progressive attitude towards it are looked upon as heretical, and akin to being sacrilegious. All such efforts are seen by the people as presumptuousness, rather than as a sincere effort to develop the language.

This plight faced by the ancient languages was common to all other departments of thought: Innumerable kinds of superstitious beliefs had stemmed the tide of intellectual progress. It was the revolution based on monotheism which broke down this barrier for the first time in history.

This revolution originated in Arabia and came to finally exert its influence all over the world. Human history then entered the age of realism, leaving behind the age of superstition.

The very moment when the Qur'an announced that there was no god but the one God, the scientific way of thinking was set in motion. People began thinking about things independently of unrealistic, mental barriers. This way of thinking went from strength to strength until; finally, it led to the present scientific revolution.

Believing only in one God and refusing to grant the status of divinity to all other things results in nothing enjoying the status of sanctity except this one God. All other things, besides this one God are powerless and equally so, that is, nothing has any special status. It was actually the 'divine' status of things which was acting as a barrier to their becoming subjects of research and investigation. Once all these things were divested of their so-called divinity, they naturally came down to the level of being proper subjects for research and investigation. It is this special achievement of Islam which entitles it to be regarded as the creator of the modern age.

The Wages of Man

“And on that day when the unbelievers are brought before the fire of Hell (We shall say to them): ‘Ye squandered your good things in the life of the world and sought comfort therein. Now this day ye are rewarded with the doom of ignominy because ye were disdainful in the land without a right and because ye used to transgress.’” (Qur’an 46:20)

Whatever the resources given to man in this world, such as physical strength, intelligence, wealth, position, material benefits and opportunities they are all bestowed by the Creator so that man may derive further benefit from them.

‘Benefit’ here means psychological gain. But this can fall into two different categories. One (as in the verse above) is marked by *fisq* (pride) and *fijr* (disobedience). The other is marked by humility and gratitude. If a man becomes arrogant on receiving these blessings, if he exploits these valuable resources purely to achieve personal fame and prestige, it is as bad as simply squandering the opportunity. Where he should have sought spiritual uplift from them, he has misused them to bring him material dividends in the present world. Nothing but doom and destruction awaits such a man in the life to come.

The better kind of man is one who, on receiving these resources, thanks his Creator for all His blessings and conducts himself with humility. He acknowledges that all these benefits have been given to him by God. He uses these resources for God’s purposes and not for his own selfish ends. He is one who has made the best provision, through these blessings, for the life hereafter. He has utilized his blessings in such a way as to be deserving of paradise. Such a person will find the choicest of treasures awaiting him in the hereafter, and his striving after righteousness will be returned to him in the form of perennial gardens.

In the present life everyone is granted equal opportunities. Some earn the world, while others earn the Hereafter.

Gulf Diary

5

23rd February, 1991

Saddam Hussain had indulged in such tall talk before January 17 and during the early days of the war, that nothing could induce him to withdraw his forces from Kuwait, which he had already declared to be the 19th 'province' of Iraq. Now the Allied forces under American leadership have succeeded in destroying the military might of Iraq and Saddam Hussain has expressed his willingness to withdraw his troops unconditionally from Kuwait. Today's front page news is all about his altered stand, which he has communicated to the Russians. *The Hindustan Times* of February 23 carries this headline: 'Iraq Agrees to Unconditional Pullout.'

Another news item alongside this says that the US 'rejects peace offer'. Prior to January 17, when the war had not yet started, all that the Americans demanded was that Iraq pull out its troops from Kuwait. Shah Fahd had announced that, Saddam Hussain would receive brotherly treatment and would be given all possible help if he vacated Kuwait. But this proposal was summarily rejected by Saddam Hussain. Now it is the turn of the Americans and their allies. Now that they have almost won the war, they will not be willing to stop short of crushing Saddam Hussain.

Saddam Hussain's present stance displays his immaturity. What the wise man does is no different from what the unwise man does. It's just that the wise man acts before the calamity and the unwise man afterwards. A Persian poet has rightly asked why a man should do something which will bring him only shame. (*Chera kare kunad aaqil ke baz aayad pashemani*).

A positive step must take you to a positive result. Any step that leads to destruction is not positive. It is suicidal. Unfortunately, most of the Muslim leaders of today are engaged in such fruitless activities. Their unrealistic steps have done no good to the Muslims and have surely been the cause of greater destruction.

24th February, 1991

Time magazine (February 14) reports that there are people in the US who do not want to participate in the Gulf war. The Afro Americans, who hate the whites, say that this war is being fought to establish the supremacy of the white race and, for this reason, they should not be asked to participate. (p. 39). Similar views are held by the American Muslims, who regard the USA as an anti-Islamic country. They consider this war as being between the faithful and the infidels and, in consequence, they too are against participating in it. (*The Times of India*, February 12, p. 6)

A Korean, David E. Scott, has written to *Time* magazine to say that, in his view, it is not right for anyone to adopt such a stance after acquiring US citizenship. He says: "My son is an American. The fact that he was born in Korea does not in any way diminish his responsibility to defend his country. If you accept the benefits, you must also accept the responsibilities (p.8)."

I am in agreement with the Korean's standpoint. Once you have become a citizen of a country other than that of your origin and have taken the oath of loyalty to it, it becomes your duty to set aside other loyalties and to fight for your new country in times of need. A man may renounce his citizenship and migrate elsewhere, but so long as he lives in the country of his adoption, he is morally bound to defend it.

It is very unethical to enjoy the benefits a country has to offer without being prepared to accept the responsibilities which go along with them. It is only by discharging your responsibilities that you become entitled to the benefits. Anyone 'who refuses to accept such responsibilities should be required to renounce his right to any benefits.

25th February, 1991

The *Reader's Digest* (February, 1991) has published a six-page report by one Ms Rachel Flick giving details of how the western countries hoodwinked Mr. Saddam Hussain into allowing them to siphon off Iraqi funds. A large part of Iraq's 45 billion- dollar annual revenue, and a large quantity of oil used to flow to these countries. For the last 20 years Iraq has been spending about 14 billion dollars annually on arms purchase. Numerous underground shelters for the air force were constructed by western contractors.

Saddam Hussain's obsession with the thought of becoming the leader of the Arab countries was fully exploited by the west, who bought Iraqi oil from him at very low prices while selling armaments to him at very high prices. Actually, it was in pursuit of their own economic gain that the west armed the Iraqi leader. There was also a political motive. The west was under the impression that Iraq would use these weapons against Iran, which was the sworn enemy of the west.

With his dictator's mental make-up, Saddam Hussain chose to ignore the reality. He failed to understand the difference between the invasion of Iran and the invasion of Kuwait. While the invasion of Iran was looked upon with favour by the west, the invasion of Kuwait was certainly not. By invading Kuwait, Saddam actually hit western interests. 'The west, there fore, joined forces to crush Saddam Hussain. The same article quotes a commentary by professor Hans-Heino Kopietz of London.

"We closed our eyes because some businessmen wanted to make money and because Saddam Hussain was a useful tool against Iran. Saddam is a Frankenstein monster that the West created." (p. 150)

If Saddam Hussain had made plans to build his nation along constructive lines, he would have sought help from the west to build his industrial and agricultural bases. If he had concentrated on the education of his countrymen, the future of Iraq would have been very different from what is indicated at present.

26th February, 1991

The following is an extract from a commentary on the Gulf war which appeared in *Qaumi Awaz* of February 26:

A Saudi diplomat, based in New Delhi, while talking to this reporter, expressed his displeasure over the shift of consensus among the world Muslims and said that Saudi Arabia would review its policy towards the various Muslim groups and organizations at the end of the war, because all of these have failed in rallying support in favour of the Saudi stand. (p. 7)

Saudi Arabia has been giving liberal aid to all the Muslim organizations of the world. But during the war, Muslims, everywhere deserted Saudi Arabia and supported Saddam Hussain, despite the fact that Saudi Arabia's role was that of a defender, while Saddam Hussain's was clearly that of invader and oppressor. This is because of the emotion-based policy of the Muslim leaders. The Muslim leaders had their own axe to grind, by collecting crowds under their banners; they could claim to the Arab world that the Muslim masses were with them. Under this compulsion, they resorted to emotional slogans. Knowing that masses respond better to an emotional appeal, they presented the Palestinian issue in its most exaggerated light, and made the best use of the power of the pen and other media to prove that the US is the greatest enemy of Islam.

The result was that Muslims became ultra-sensitive, and emotions rose to an even higher pitch against the US and Israel. When they saw Saddam Hussain challenging Islam's greatest enemy and raining down Scuds upon Israel, with the warning that they should come to their senses in the face of the resurrected Salahuddin Ayubi, the Muslims were swayed. Saddam's words worked like magic on them. Their perception was now of Saudi Arabia supporting Islam's enemy number one, while Saddam Hussain pledged himself to drowning the enemy in the sea. Predictably, they deserted the Saudis and rallied behind Saddam.

While it may serve our own interests to climb the ladder of leadership by whipping up communal Sentiments, this will in the long run prove disastrous for the community.

27th February, 1991

Today's *Al-Majalla* carries an article by Dr. Aliuddin Hilal, Director, Centre for Political Studies, University of Cairo, regarding the Gulf crisis. It is entitled, 'Let's ponder over the causes, and we are at the helm of affairs.'

He maintains that we have fallen into the habit of taking a peripheral view of things without ever going below the surface. He feels it imperative that we should all equip ourselves with the intelligence which would enable us to study the problems of the Gulf countries and their people in depth.

In principle, this is a very important point, but it serves no great purpose in the present context. To acquire the necessary intelligence, it is essential to have the freedom to level criticism, not in general terms, but at specific personalities. Muslims abhor such criticism and unless they can overcome their ultra-sensitivity on this score, they will always suffer from intellectual immaturity.

The Gulf crisis is a case in point. The root cause is the adoption of an attitude which fails to decry the oppression of others. We voice our protests only when we ourselves are directly affected. When Saddam bombed Iran in 1980, the entire Arab world remained silent. When the same Saddam Hussain invaded Kuwait, every Arab state cried out in horror. This is the attitude which is at the root of all ills. But not even our most pious men are willing to listen to just criticism.

Condoning this kind of attitude while talking of equipping oneself with intelligence is nothing but wishful thinking.

28th February, 1991

The *Time* magazine, dated March 4 arrived today. It carries a commentary on the Gulf crisis and Saddam Hussain by Yevgeni Primakov, an advisor to the USSR government.

Mr. Primakov says that he has met with Saddam Hussain on a number of occasions. The first meeting was in 1969 when he was correspondent for *Pravda*. At that time, Saddam Hussain was the leader of the party and was yet to become the President of Iraq. After he became president, Mr. Primakov met him regularly in Baghdad as well as in Moscow. "We developed an informal relationship," says Mr. Primakov who, as the special envoy of Mikhail Gorbachov, met Saddam Hussain in 1991, to discuss the withdrawal of troops from Kuwait. "I realized that it was possible that Saddam did not have complete information. He gave priority to positive reports; for example, about the support Iraq was receiving in the Arab world, about the anti-war demonstrations in the West, about the first hints of difference between the Allies in the anti-Iraqi coalition. And as for bad news, the bearer could pay a high price."

The same weakness is also to be found in other Muslim leaders even in religious leaders of stature. They live in their own make believe world, and if anyone disagrees with them, he becomes despicable in their eyes. This is how they become cut off from reality. As a result, they take such ill-considered steps as can lead only to destruction.

1st March, 1991

The Gulf War that started with a blunder ended in a catastrophic defeat. Today's papers are full of news that should serve as a warning. The *Times of India* of March 1st displays in large bold letters the headline: Gulf War Ends. There is a photograph of Iraqi prisoners of war packed into trucks that are being escorted to special camps by American soldiers. This photograph testifies not only to the Iraqis' defeat but also to their humiliation. Never before have the Muslims been subjected to such a crushing

defeat. This reminded me of an incident dating back to 586 BC in which the Jews suffered at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar II. This is mentioned briefly in the Qur'an (17:5) while it is recounted in detail in the Bible.

The Allied forces under the American command have destroyed the economy of Iraq by their non-stop bombing. Iraq possesses 10% of the world's oil deposit; its annual revenue from the sale of oil used to be of the order of 45 billion dollars. But now the citizens of Iraq are to be seen collecting bits and pieces of refuse from the roads to use as fuel. After the destruction of Iraq, the Allied forces cut the supply line to Kuwait, leaving the Iraqi garrison helpless. Two days of ground warfare was enough to rout the Iraqis. Over one lakh troops were killed and thirty thousand were taken prisoner. This was war between high-tech armaments and conventional weaponry. The conventional weapons were bound to lose.

Considering that the entire Muslim population of the world was supporting Saddam Hussain, the latter's defeat is, in a way, the defeat of the whole Muslim world. The Iraqi leaders and the Muslim leaders of the world have brought this humiliation upon themselves through their own foolishness. There is a saying of the Prophet to the effect that "it is not proper for a believer to bring about his own humiliation." Asked how one could be the cause of one's own humiliation, he replied that this could happen by willingly facing an ordeal without possessing the necessary strength to deal with it. (*Mishkat Al-Masabih*, 2/771)

Unity is Strength

There is no greater source of strength in the world than unity and no great source of weakness than disunity. That is why Islam teaches us to maintain unity at all costs, no matter how much one has to sacrifice in the process.

When Moses was rescued from the Pharaoh, he went away for forty days to Mount Sinai. In his absence, the Israelites were lured by Samiri into worshipping a golden calf. Moses' brother Aaron, who had been left in charge of the people during his absence, did his utmost to discourage them from worshipping the calf, but his efforts were of no avail. When Moses returned to find his people worshipping an idol, he admonished Aaron severely, demanding to know why he could not have set the people right when he saw them go astray. When Moses wanted to know why Aaron had disobeyed him, the latter said, by way of excuse, "Son of my mother. Do not seize my beard or the hair of my head. I was afraid that you might say: "You have sown discord among the Children of Israel and did not wait for my orders." (Quran, 20: 92:93)

The fact that Aaron acted in the way he did, and Moses accepted his reasoning, shows the great importance attached to unity by both of these great prophets. Solidarity in a community is so precious that it must be maintained at all costs. It must be given top priority. There is no point in bringing in other reforms if unity is sacrificed in the process. There is no greater source of strength in the world than unity and no great source of weakness than disunity. That is why Islam teaches us to maintain Unity at all costs, no matter how much one has to sacrifice in the process.